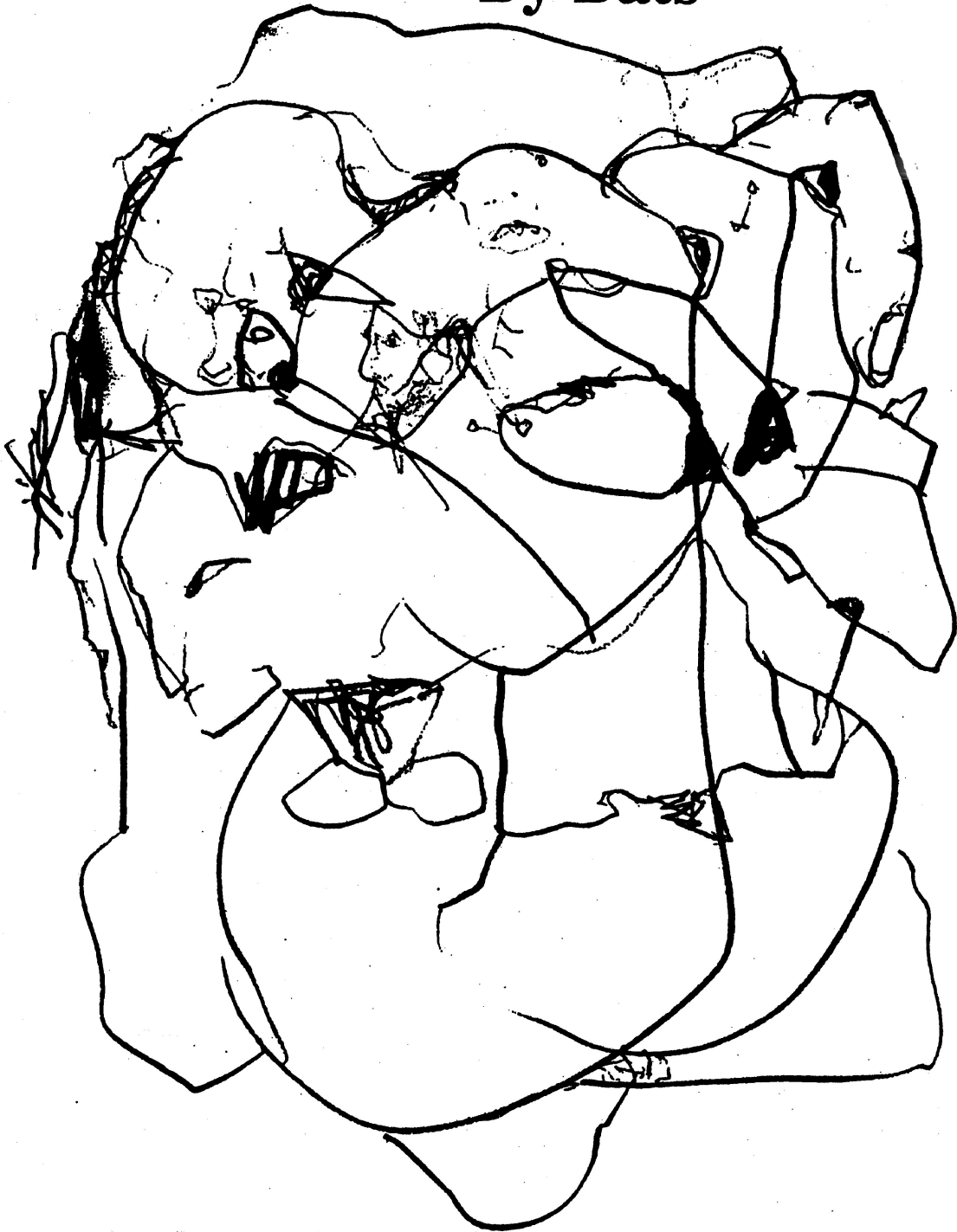


**My Flashlight
Was Attacked
By Bats**



Marty Christensen

My Flashlight Was Attacked By Bats

by

MARTY CHRISTENSEN

Drawings by Charles Clough

**Lorna Viken Books
Portland, Oregon**

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Introduction By Gus Van Sant

The first time that I ever saw Marty he was walking in the Portland rain with the hood of his jacket pulled over his head like deep sea diver wearing a bell helmet.

Observing him from the safety of my car, which was stopped at a stop light, Marty looked as if he was seeing things that most of us would never see. And doing things that we would never do. And thinking things that I will never think. And he was saying things that we would never be able to say. He is psychically deep sea diving, and protecting himself from the elements while gathering images in his head, the hood meant to keep them inside-o-his head until he gets home and he can deal with them there in the solitude of his confines, near his printing press.

When he reads this he will respond, "That is a bunch of bullshit, man." Because he is probably walking around to *clear* his head and not walking around to *fill* his head. There perhaps is too much in there to begin with and he doesn't need to put more in. He has to get it out. And that is where his work comes in.

I feel quite unqualified to write about another artist's work, and also am not the sort of artist to realize, like Marty has, that the world which he loves, is a jukebox and he is its dime. (A distortion of one of his lines of poetry about his love for his wife.) One of the many things that he will discover and I never will.

I have always known Marty as the most independent of the Portland poets, one to be respected and sometimes feared, because he is a stick of dynamite wrapped up like a firecracker, and he can go off at any moment. But the place that I like to see him go off the best is when he is sitting and reading his poetry in front of a group of his followers and fans, like me. Because it is then that Marty really shines, and the power of his work starts to come through, in a forum, with others around to behold the words coming out of his head like a message from a man reporting from another planet. You have to have Marty there, reading it for you.

As a way of saying that I do have great respect and love of Marty's work, I told him that I would write this introduction. He impresses me with all the things that he sees that I don't, and the things that he does that I will never do. I have to read them or hear them read to me to find out what they are.

read on.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gus Van Sant". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

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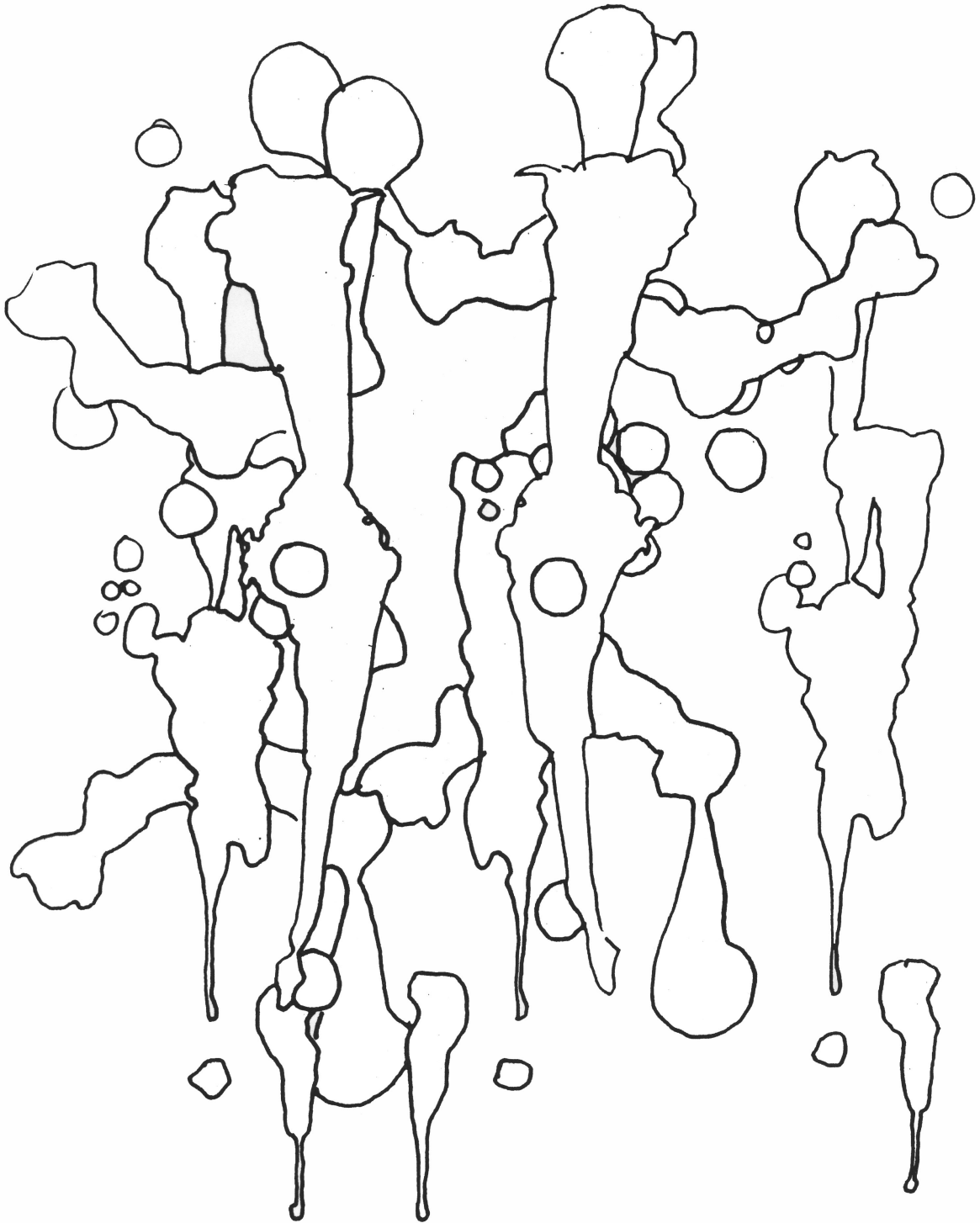
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BOOK 1

MY FLASHLIGHT WAS ATTACKED BY BATS

MY FLASHLIGHT WAS ATTACKED BY BATS

Thru
night/bright
air
bats swarmed
and moving
out of sight
were vanishing
miraculously now
till none were left
not trace remained
except
I realized
that I had dropped
my flashlight
which was bobbing
rapidly downstream
and I was almost blind
far from our cabin, lost.
Now is the time I thought
to sing
and drive these fiends away.
I sang
of their malevolent
red eyes
and how I'd smash
their nasty so-called wings
with a clenched fist.
I threatened Life
for any bat seen flying
past the moon.

LORNA

You are a plum tree moving
towards the mountains.
Liberated, you are a jade flute
used only in the highest
mayan ceremonies. I guess
you are
about the only american
i've met
whose tastes are truly French.
you could be a jukebox.
i could be a dime.

FOLLOWING THE SNAIL'S PATH

In my dream of a film Victor
Mature (who plays Centurion)
is quoting Homer. He is riding
on a silver pony toward the moon.
His manager, a placid, nightmare figure,
is staring, quietly, into the rain.
They're statuesque, unique upon their horses,
glad to be alive, to defend a forgotten idea.
Know that the silence of all history is camping
out upon the borders, waiting for another Cadmus
to arrive, and sow the Dragon's Teeth. A pause.
Then, a swarthy hand, descended from the clouds,
appears, and pokes a finger out beyond the painted screen.
This is the same finger that was later to create the Burning
Bush, The Fall of Rome, and Israel. But now it fades
back out of sight. Not even God
disturbs the reveries of these two soldiers leaving home.

SHAFTED

a failure even
your vasectomy
became a tragic
comedy the pants
removed before the
operation hang like
spurs now
 in the nursery
 of your ex-wife

ALONE AT LAST

i want to culminate
tonight
by cuddling up
like a good book
or melting
like fresh sperm.
the trees
are waving
their enormous arms.
the shadows
are waving
their tiny ones.

MISS UNIVERSE

Pink & blue
hydrangea buds
imbued
enfolded by
the ocean
walk and shimmer

weirded out
her labia
caress themselves

3 of the judges
notice. 2 give
extra points.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

the angel's here
whose eyes
extract themselves
& float
like molecules
connecting all the stars
or, as the lunar atmosphere
suggests, can solarize
within immensity
up into the maze of night
quite far above our range
of gravity
a distant point in space
beyond this place
where church bells ring
and strangers sing
while laser beams
direct death charges
thru the year

THE OUTERSPACE PRAYER

AND if I
truly am
as I have
been accused
INSANE
then I
shall organize
the mad so that
their souls complete an actual
WORLD
that conforms
to my desires

PROSE POEM

Scientists, working for Adolph Hitler,
succeeded somehow in transforming 500

pineal glands into one enormous freak, who
to this day lives on, above the Alps where

he lies bleeding in a thousand languages.
Recently, carried by a southern wind, globs

of his spit dropped onto Texas lawns whose
owners swore the “blobs” were still growing

hours later, Isaac Asimov, scientific expert,
called in by the government, was heard on tv

to make this remark...Oh my God, Oh my God. For
nestling within the phlegm was something enigmatic.

HOMAGE TO WILLIAM JAMES

I walked out of my room today
& looking down at my shoe saw
that my shoestring was a snake

but being very late to work I
just tied it up in the usual way

TAKING A BREAK

I only talk to myself five or ten minutes
a day now. Of course, I'm only alone
five or ten minutes a day now.
I write this and I pause
and then start talking to myself again.

LASTING HATE

When I was a lad I'd roam
sewers in search of animals
which I would kill then try
to sell for money

I hated them then and I still
feel nothing but complete contempt

THE LABOR POOL

we have an engineer
who is a Spanish-American boy
we've got an up-and-coming hustler
ready for the ultimate caress
and one substantially maturing poet
who is certain that his father
was misunderstood
and likes to talk about it

THE VET

I have a gun at home
and when I find out
who is responsible for
what has happened to me

I intend to use it.

POEM FOR MY MOTHER

25 years later
& I'm still awake
can't sleep
not even trying
to turn night
into day
just reaching out
beyond my bed
for matches &
a cigarette &
pencil & paper
to imagine you
IMMENSE BUT TRANSITORY
pulling back the blankets
& tucking me in
& then
I burnt
my fingers.

WHEN YOU SMILE IN YOUR SLEEP

Thin fingers seem to
wander thru the room
like crawfish
walking on the bottom
of the deepest stream
in all of Christendom

SMOGGY WEATHER

blown
smoke air is
at least was
free

to drift
away

it didn't happen
yesterday

AUGUST POEM

for Clifford Gleason

there i was
just simply
there
an amateur pond
for your more professional
frogs to balance on & still
i was performing well
beyond all comprehension
even when the wind blew
hard as you were far above me
& the newmoon
jumped like an hallucination
swam there
thru myself
like an hallucination
& the newmoon
put some shades on
put on gold shades
& walked away

PING DYNASTY POEM

Scenario, the ocean slants.
Clouds knock & enter Heaven
thru the mountains. The sky
becomes invisible.

Then four men arrive on
motorscooters.

HUMBLY

dim regrets came
possibly cloned
unsure of the way

SONNET

The old order must go down
The voice must change
There are too many bad drivers
Today a crack appears a cackle snaps
That really had to happen
No wonder all these incidents occur
That way we can see on thru and plant
The dead arise we grab their arms
They are what we reach down and pull up
That is known as hardening the fingers
No wonder that we jerk them up so gently
They are almost all that we have left
The sidewalks feel strange beneath their toes
The sparrows standing on the highest branches
faint to see the loveless grip their loins
when these convulsive lechers dance towards town



BOOK 2

THE DREAMS OF UNKNOWN CODFISH

AMIDST THESE DREAMS

allow yourself the luxury of truth
let's face it
those who speak do not know
those who don't speak know too much

JACUZZI MEDITATION

O to leave young
indisputably hung

and preaching revolution
door to door

THE OLD DAYS

white pebbles would arrive out
of the sky. then a science was
prepared for voyage. a lustrous
rock of faces. 7 doves encircled it.

O the sky was blue & my shoes fit.
folks lapped up wisdom from the shadows
that got carried back from time to time.

UNSUNG HEROES #17

Rank vegetation started collapsing onto
natives that we had befriended underneath
a moon more fried from self-absorption than
the rest of us were pooped by passion The
grassy veldt itself lay there like a hotdog
bleeding in a jar The treasure kept fleeing
for oblivion as a suction pump droned on & on
regurgitating random samples of grey ore that
we would label “very rare” then sadly throw away

LESS IS MORE

Normally I would require an extra-large container for all my cost-effective prohibitions and restraints, “stuff” which eliminates much besmirching of what originally might have been some pretty good intentions. Shrewdness requires bypassing most of the known systems in favor of my own performance of course. The little machine-gun that got left out underneath the laurel bushes melted long ago. Most of what had been achieved has wizened out of recognition. Some, and by no means the most deluded, simply have accepted the radical randomness of a wildcat campaign. Many more bygones-be-bygones jet-set tacky and insincere horrendous vibes still drift back wistful to this outfit. So we have no choice but to continue snuffing them. Absolutely there are going to be risks. Certainly a lot of cutbacks must be made. Begging your indulgence, the only thing I really do need is an apparatus that’s just large enough for me to get all of the equipment that’s been scattered back inside.

A CASUAL AFFAIR

Before I started publishing sometimes
whole packets of my poems disappeared

But the thought that a thief was
reading me was almost reassuring

Now my works are mostly read by people who
are just in the right place at the right time

SCHOOL DAYS

Recess
10 years
away

Tired,
so go to sleep

Martin...
Don't for-

get they
SEE YOU.

Bastards
every one.

FISHING CLEAR LAKE

for my Father

most fishermen are casting
at the 2 inlets to the lake
not in the middle
where at one point the bottom
can be occasionally perceived
190 feet below
the older fish perhaps live there
can see a lure a mile away
so I feel naked & decide to fish
within some shade just off the gut

20 years have passed since
I fished here happily young
trees still stand up
among the debris gathered
on the sand-bottomed lake floor
numinous & funereal now
these trees should have
pierced up thru the surface
where my fingers are distorted
on the face of the shadowy water
only they were just deadwood that
I once thought was growing still
& for an instant I imagine leaves
as my animated bait drops slowly down

PORTRAIT

Sitting in the chair, he remembers that they'd left the elevator. They'd left the elevator, which was burning, then burnt out. A board of lights, which was the control system; a control system which needed to be replaced. That's what the word was. Once they had left the elevator. But how could it be when the replacement was upstairs and to get upstairs they needed to use the elevator? Well, the answer was that that was taken care of. The part somehow had not flamed completely out. There somehow was a solution. Not only that, but the supplies in the supply store, including food, wine and all the necessities, were going to be provided as a bonus, so the people would not have to worry; at least not for that one day.

Why they were free then he didn't know, but he did know it would be fixed. This was particularly calming since the air was getting thinner. Hadn't really begun to get hard to breathe, but there was a feeling already of thinness like being on the first slope of a small mountain. But everything was going to be all right. Everything would be all right. In the large room, something was going to happen. He was going to happen. Then he realized that he was walking. Walking to make something happen. And that he was awake. And that he was walking out of the bedroom. He was walking now, not in his sleep, but had begun before. Waking out of the dream. The slow grinding agony of what was not quite a nightmare. He had gotten up and had begun to walk. And now he was still walking; almost, just now remembering, out of the panic. The elevator in his mind, had been fixed, but he was walking as though still asleep. Had been walking in his sleep.

He heard a noise. His nerves jumped just a little bit. But, consciously now, he realized that what had made him nervous was a possibility. That it was a person in the apartment below, knocking on the floor, because the creaking of the floor as he walked on it, had caused some alarm or consternation. But he realized, waking up even more now, that it was a knocking in the wall. A knocking that always occurred at around dawn, when the heating system came on. The knock the walls would knock. Just a little bit. Just for a few minutes, as the heat came on. He wondered “shall I write this down?”, as he sat in the chair in the living room, in the semi-darkness, lighting his first cigarette of the day.

NOSTALGIA FOR THE INFINITE

they were perusing velvet comics
saying words like eat my words or
someone's scratching on my desk
as populations melted
thru the crack inside the dream
where these two adolescents sucked & spurted
commingling their astral essences
like starlets weeping at a wake in Africa,
knowing soon the secret would explode
& cream the school with ecstasy
that right now called it basketball
& walked like dragons thru the town
not talking any crap
about the weather either
but just spending funny money
that they stuck inside their jeans

NATURAL PROCESS

what a pity this language creates
objects of desire
like featherless birds
which lock pictures
into image words
with
one end always left open
for invalidating concepts
to create a vacuum sensibility
that escapes me
by definition
while
at the same time
aggravations
messed up by concentration
tumultuously thicken
until a sudden gust of wind
whispered from within
makes us smile with cracking faces
as if
unbelievably
embarrassed

MEDIEVAL LOVERS

some sour monstrous air
has coveted our lair but
until both fates melt commonly
together like flowers withered
by a lizard's lisp tell me pleased
with you beyond belief to nullify all Doubt
before the towers lock tonight
your hand will rest within my glove
and all of their worst pills will
never wake us screaming from these dreams

THE DREAMS OF UNKNOWN CODFISH

Did you hear the one about the guy who dreamt he died and went to Heaven? All he saw was sawdust everywhere. "What is this" he inquired. "Heaven" said St. Peter, "Now, but when the weather starts to change..."

Night, upon the Boulevard of St. Germain. You pause, caress my dorsal fin, me scarcely breathing. Tell me, you say, clicking off your bow-tie. Yes, I used to be a human being too, until that night. Driving home from my hum-drum job the brakes went out & I ran over a small child. Parking my car in a tree I climbed upon a bus. There had been a revolution on the bus and the driver, maintaining control as it were, was waving an enormous shoe. He turned on me, screaming, but everyone agreed that I was innocent. I got off the bus & started walking down an oyster-colored subway. A beautiful young girl appeared & and we began to talk. "Action" I told her, "action is different in William Faulkner & in F. Scott Fitzgerald." She understood & I was able to remove her clothes & float suspended in the air. Later, we were married & moved into a cabin just below the old abandoned dam. There we were, surrounded by the water...a million pygmies have attacked the White House. Well that's fine, you say. But, what about me, the President. I walk out upon the balcony to reason with the crowd. My friends I say My Friends, waving a gigantic telegram above my head. I know the ecstasy of paranoia based upon hallucinations. I am aware of the actual facts concerning my own criminal position...

Be calm, you say, the waters will recede...the stars come out...the film is wearing out...I fear the Star-Kist tuna!

THE WRONG PROFESSION

I am tired of being an insane poet.
I want to drive around in a big cigar.

GOD MUST EXIST

for this car filled with lunatics
has not been built by human hands

A CAUTIONARY TALE

Her virgin soul had been an orchid of the spirit
now she was getting older & had begun to fear it

One night the swan of Paradise swam by
& watched her thru a sad abandoned eye

She sneezed into the bread which she was kneading
& she tried to hide the book that she was reading

On a dim night a purple clown appeared
she took him to her room & disappeared

They ate up all the bread she had been kneading
& they discussed the book which she was reading

Another night the swan of Paradise swam by
& watched them in the kitchen getting high

That's all that I can tell you in this moral tale
except the spinster and the clown both went to jail

ONCE INSIDE OF THE LABORATORY

The wit and wisdom of the damned
Fell down encumbered by ecstasy.
Visions of a demagogue jumped singing
Out of walnut shells and paper dolls
Experiments which used to interest.
Now remembrance like a walking dream
Dead serious in this darkish room
Slits into sentiments of my wax face
Cracked open at pretentious eyes who
Stare back at my syntax with alarm.
Whose world could almost last intact
Relaxing into charm with middle-age.
Where my discomfort speaks in tongues.

YOU STAND THERE SADLY MISSING

from the bank where you were happy yesterday
& now today are fishing. Slanted at a rakish
angle, bestride the old brook, your pole gleams
wet, your worms are cached discreetly in your creel.
You caught a few, but they didn't fight, were sewer
fish. You sat down, caressing the cold ground, & dreamt
about a cottage on the Bosphorus. Thought, idiot, a
woman could do better. There she was & is & did &
what she captures turns into a wolf who chases you away

A GRUESOME NIGHTMARE

After I inadvertently discovered that the fungus people were working out of a rebuilt garage, rigged up replete with myriad fantastical devices which triggered instant radio-active conversions, there was only one thing left to find: a plausible clue. Their motive seemed obvious: complete and total dominance. One would twitch his nose and then another would and gradually both noses came to resemble each other. All life is mere clay before these mushrooms. Beneath the floor an incessant cross-over of wavelines for telekinetic communications kept operating placidly while one by one the fresh recruits were taken up before the board, transformed, and then just issued, phenomenally ecstatic, out through one of the trapdoors

THE MAGIC THEATRE

as the space inside expands
the orator stands up & speaks:
HELL IS THE CONTINUATION OF THE
ORDINARY INTO OUTER SPACE. no
response. MAN CANNOT CONTAIN GOD
CONSCIOUSNESS BECAUSE OF ALL THE FLIES
& OTHER BUGS...jive talk, went
right over their heads. KISS ME, he yells,
FLIES
widening the apertures of their mad eyes.
For that is all that anybody wants to hear
their disembodied hearts are moving near...

LAST NIGHT

life
was burning
its bridges
all
night
while the
giraffes stooped
down
to eat the tiny
leaves
that had escaped
the hustle
of the night before

this jungle
ruled by a dilation
the moon
between the trees
a captive audience
of owls & snakes &
trance-like

bloodshot broken
minds
that saw the moon
& watched the stars
without much
real understanding

just tedium just bliss
a drum a pipe the para
phernalia

of the night before

KNOWN ONLY TO GOD

I had a dream last night
& dreamt that the two of us
were tramps, no Bodhisattvas,
just plain destitute in Omaha, Nebraska
holed up in a silo, watching mold fall
off the stale wheat while sprouting fungus
crawled over the dead cattle in the circle
where the crazy leprous farmers gathered weeping
burying their kind in the green, sulfurous air
& ochrous ozone, praying to their God while we cried
bitterly about our sex life in this land of lepers
plotting how to get to Kansas in the Spring

& laughing at the fact we were invulnerable
stone-drunk & right in there with God



BOOK 3

DYING IN THE PROVINCES

sometimes apprehension will appear
but only thru the window

this room this structure is safe
i know this

i have no desire to explain except
to say

i am a lunatic

i am made up of numerals & units that
strike matches in the empty auditorium

i am not all that conceited

not with the cost of apprehension

absolutely clear...

a structure paralyzed by thought
that is about where my head's at

tonight i stand alone against the universe
tomorrow will arrive in twenty odd minutes

REVISIONISM

forgive my paranoia
of last night. There
is nothing "wrong" with
John Quincy Adams. Or
anything suspicious in the fact
that he was born in Quincy, Massachusetts.

COWBOY

the furtivist diminishment of logic
is as silver as the nature of a yodel

the sun descends upon the blurry hills
the moon ascends to fill the sky with resin

somewhere there is a somehow which is like
a giant moth

except it looks more to be a crippled crab
& eats cheese sandwiches with almost crunchy

who just joined the outfit for a smoke
who just joined the outfit for a smoke

BACK TO THE GRINDSTONE

a good good morning my dreams
a green spot on a sandwich
has developed spongy feelers
which stampede into the coffee
induce a momentary calm
& vomiting. The morning news arrives
emerging from beneath the earth.
There is also a slight mist there
smoke transmitted to my eye
as tho somehow connected to a thought.
The taught, as Alfalfa might have said,
is a slingshot throwing off its rock.
There is another kind of thought proceeds.
The kind that learned people have to eat
before they are allowed to hit the street.

THE SHAMAN

there is a strange
boom when he explodes

we go up
& remain aloft

he gestures from below

we feel calm
& flap our arms

but don't dare to bend over

JACK FROST

a lithe figure
wearing an ascot
fez & bloody eye
brows

SANTA CLAUS

his death will come by snowfall demons
selling ashes to his painted figurines

BEFORE THE AVALANCHE

just go away
and stay forever
Narcissus pled
so, rejected,
Echo went back
into the woods

it was said
she ran away
and hid
that she was
already fading
when she did

neither mortal
nor immortal
partly nature
partly not
her songs are the conduit
that links us to the Gods

NARCISSUS

there is no way
to explain

just picture the poor kid
he stares at himself in the water

he sees a brazen enigma

he plunges
in

like a child learning to swim home

DESIRE SOMETIMES CAN

get smoke transmitted thru an eye
an eye connected to a golden hand
held up, aloof, dumb & eager like
a polyester bag containing our desire.

When this strange bomb explodes then the
cowboys start to sing. The sun goes down.

When this strange bomb explodes then we
go somewhere else to watch the rising moon.

FULL MOON

flaps tap the window sharply
cracking branches break then
slash a lonesome mind in twain

down in the basement next year's
wine explodes all over everything

THE COMMUNE

MOST OF ALL i guess i remember
the last meeting our leader
said his wife did not know what
sex was all about & most of the
brothers who balled her were there
& 3 women & a child all fainted &
a nasturtium died in an upstairs room

THE SECRET AGENT

All of my life I have felt that men who
combed their hair over their bald spots
were phonies. Now I realize the hair itself
just naturally moves over the vast silence
of its own terrain; and that to go with nature
one begins to exercise his own pathetic cunning.
Today I am a man.

POOR FISH

upon the slimy boat
the ancient fisherman
paws coldly at his privates
as the lights flash on & off

while we lie here together
sucking madly thru our gills

this scene
has happened now

& no one is the wiser
not even the blond dagger
of a light bulb in the cold

WHERE THERE IS FIRE

The furtive diminishment of logic
is in the nature of my game. Dis-

membered, yet blurred news abjectly
got smoke transmitted thru a poly-

ester muse, connected to an antique
silver nostril, held aloft, grimy &

perverse with all the fizzle of desire.
When this strange perfume explodes then

cowboys start to sing. Deals are set up.
The sun goes down upon the lowly rainbow.

THE PARANOID'S REVENGE

there is a little smoke
on the horizon of death

which makes me want to jump
right past the furtive air waves

splash down a happy fist
on the dismembered throttle

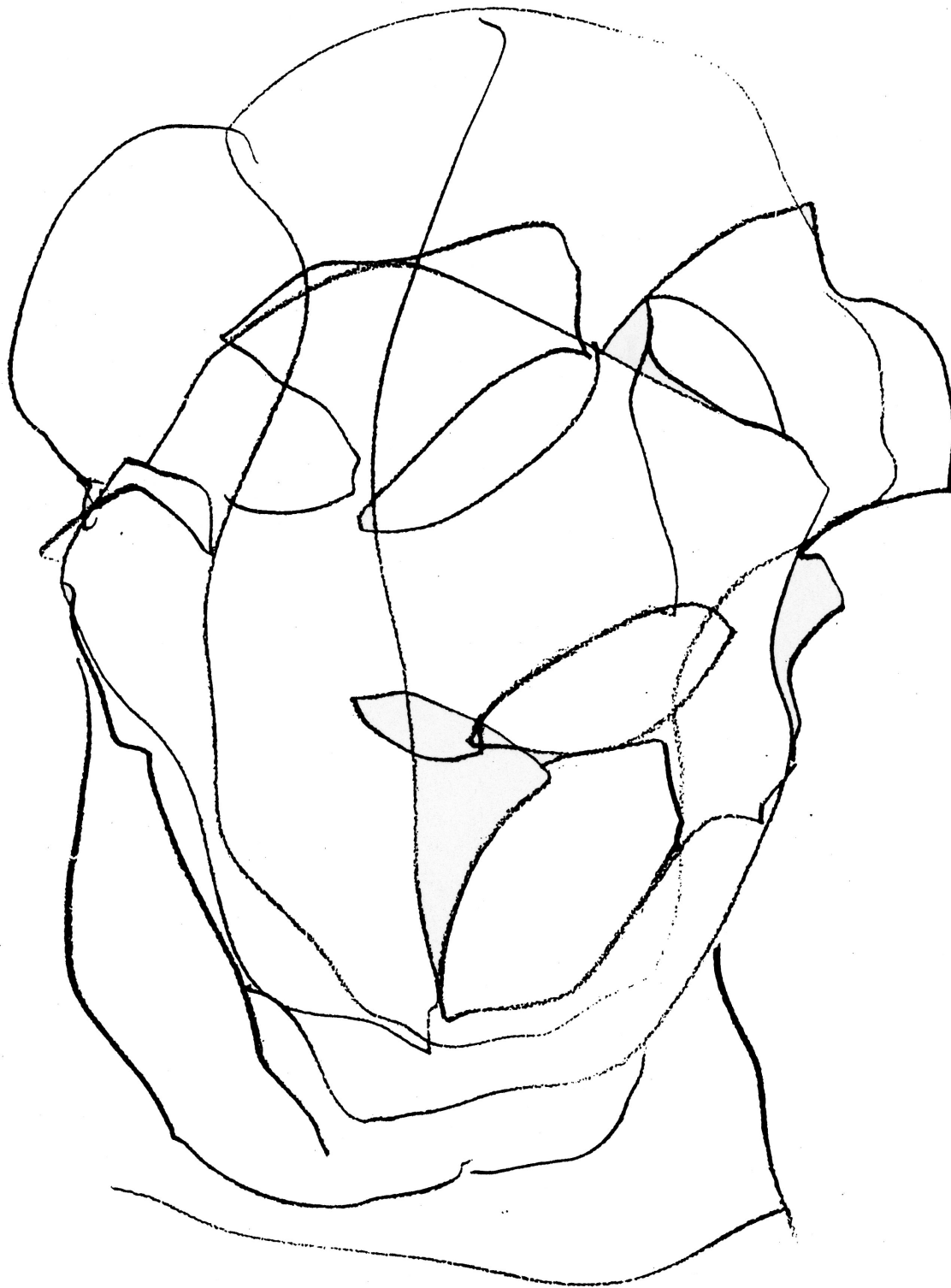
SCREAM

give me liberty or give me death
to tethered horses

eating sawdust from my hand
on the exhausted wheel

THE LAST VACATION

O
IT
WAS
THEN
WE SAW
A TREE ON
FIRE BLOSSOM
OPAL SKY SEEPS
INTO DUSTY CLOUDS
THE SUN DROPS GOLDEN
OVER PURPLE THRU MAUVE
HILLS SO FAST THAT WE DIE
INTO ITS REVERBERATING TONE



BOOK 4

AN ENDLESS CHAIN OF SULLIED HEARTS

MONSTERS

standing together
above ground
diarrhea below
like a picnic
where we are huddled
terribly on view
like a herring bone
on recall
to the void
we both say
you have done this
with a yapping tongue
as slowly the pines dip
over the barracuda
and love sits
sucking on a carp's head

UNUSUAL DEMANDS

lust over please
unlock the doors
turn on a light

I want to be remembered
twice tonight

ANIMAL CALISTHENICS

silk sounds
cheat sleep
with tricks
from childhood

APPREHENSION

at a table
in a cafe
an intense girl
is drawing ponies

immense wild horses
with colossal teeth

AT THE END OF A DRUNKEN BINGE

explosions of twilight
twinkle over the river
as sometimes my body shudders
while my hands keep idly shaking

loneliness whisks all of my emotions
far back inside bewildering memories

I remember meeting dead green men
survivors of a dream I woke up in
and knew then that they were much
much more than mere hallucinations

afterwards I screamed for thirteen hours
in jail before being handcuffed to a bed

now I have returned to normal brain
and watch the sunset slash its vein

FINDING THE GLOSSY IN A SPIDER WEB

instantaneous displays
of numinous emotion can
sometimes create fireworks
more saturnalian than the
inexpressibly randy odor
of an overworked vibrator

spreading thoughts out neatly
into patterns of sound
may even help my brain
get its feet back on the ground

WAITING FOR YOUR VISIT

blood keeps drizzling down here again
tonight & I suppose that's just about
all that is happening up there
in paradise where you live we are
both insane & when you land an
airplane on dry ice with nothing
but a picket fence to keep the ocean
out perhaps it helps to write a poem
or just take all our clothes off
& promenade the beach come rain or
shine or talk or cry or listen to each
other asking why

AFTER THE ELECTION

butterflies
caught
flying thru
the storm
regretfully
developed holes
in their wings
but kept on
flapping anyway

UNDERNEATH MAGNETIC LIGHT

hideous clouds appear at sunset
tin feet scurry aimlessly about
zig-zag sounds become clear bleats
serenely riding on the moon lit air

MAESTRO

He thinks he knows
who did it. He thinks

he knows supposedly
what it was all about.

Time after time he has
been proven wrong. But

he is a maestro anyway.
Before there was a maestro

that town you see before you
was a garbage dump with ears.

MEDITATION AT PINE LAKE CAMP

It's dusk
and being stoned I don't
rightly know if I see ripples or
am once again insane
but anyway I know I have a hard on
start crying because there may
or may not be somebody around
so how can all those ripples there mystify
me just like the flu I had for years
which may or may not be inside my body now
but puking is not going to help
not even puking right inside
the center of those rabid lines of water

THE MAN IN THE WOODCUT

he has
a room
that rains glasseyes
he has
a womb
which catches light
an apple and an acorn
all he needs now is a window
full of trees
and fog
the way it was
inside the house of night
before the silver scream
utterly shattered
what was left of the horizon

LETTER FROM HOME

I would rashly associate
my own subjectivity with
commonly accepted perception
but over and over time

after time all my friends
have reassured me that my
paranoias are a source of humor
for whatever remains of their minds.
Today I won't go out
just sit here all alone to brood
observing how my shoes devour
my feet, my shirt is crumpled by
my pants, and even my underwear
got soiled unspeakably by contact.
The little light which plaintively
shivers in the lonely yard seems to
call out, "Stop Playing That Piano."

WEIRD HIGH

Daffodils devour their own young
beneath these adolescent amours.
Whether you choose to believe
or not depends on the daffodil
because “you” by this time has just
become some tongue on a hot sword.
Times were a general power pervaded
but then a practical joke of previous
amount was worthlessly and miserably
brought up to believe that an act of
insight could beget and become independent
like the weather. Finally it dwindles
as the cliff absurdly looms up rigid
and jet-dirty with an appetite gone mad.

ORIENTAL NIGHTMARE

Trying to scribble poetry
falls down drunk
one half-assed lantern
all there is to eat
here among the skeletal remains
on the disintegrating journey through young love.

Not much of all this will survive;
only a toothless monkey
propped up at the prow
of what was once a really
pretty spiffy Neo-Symbolist canoe.
Him and, of course, the Travel Agency.

CAMEO APPEARANCES

plumes drift awkwardly
disturbing the scampering crowd
but absolutely natural
white carousels of shady horses
ride along the airwaves looking fine

IN RETROSPECT

Yesterday nothing of a painful nature
entered the blank verse of this parlor.
Drinks were served and sometimes
a delicate fragrance like damp poop was
smelt as though transposed from a pine forest.
The sun beat down on the cages of orangutan
which solemnly dotted the rooftops as
proof of the secure and natural way
our small community cooped up as we were
still strives to live in harmony with pets.
Random enigmas entertained the congregation
not the least of whom were the tourists
determined to endure the clapping of the gong
which left them weeping although seemingly
elated to the point of shimmering awareness.
Outside a droning could be heard as
harpies banned from paradise and smeared
together into lumpy memories tried
hard to get their message whistling
down the airways via telephone lines. Nobody
mentioned all the penitents hung up to dry.

A MINOR DISASTER

Flung haphazardly around
by lumbering winds
huge beakers of rain
splashed down
on the miniature lawn
which would have
quite frankly
much preferred to
just die quietly of thirst.
Same deal
with the peonies
and our fawn
who tripped over
then fell on
the blind swan
who also caught pneumonia.

SMALL WONDER

Butterflies seem so nervous.
Their wings do to an afternoon
what oral sex does for the Cinema.

FRISKING THE COBWEBS

poets wither endlessly away
like pearl-blooming oysters
harrowing the flux to make a little
something glitter out past dreaminess

not even their best friends
know quite what to say to them



BOOK 5

NOT EVEN LOOKING FOR IT ANYMORE

DAYDREAMING AT A DINER

A previously dusty bus
littered with wet people
transforms itself into a
boxcar that rusts instantly
whenever poetry appears.
Another empty boxcar starts
filling up with passengers.
Then poetry walks over:
checks it out.

THE TRUTH WILL CERTAINLY ARRIVE AT DAWN

A sharp and jagged consciousness
exploding nonchalantly with malevolence
is stampeding through my universe. After
first obscenely trickling down the chimney
lies splashed across the ceiling; and now
slander has even wandered into the very chamber
where I stand tall and proud in my belief
that I am really a very competent dentist
who is correct in spraying holy water
onto the gently rended toothless gums
of my no-longer-just-another-Nosferatu paramour.

MY LAST LETTER FROM THE FOREST

Yesterday I came upon a catatonic owl
whose rock-like tortured eyes reminded
me of your first friendly kiss. One
so lush so elaborate so damply numinous
I urgently created a hydroponic garden
in which its aroma could rest later on...
becoming at last only a memorable scent
just a message that when finally decoded
whistled right out of the window which had
served to buttress our magenta bedroom up.
Now the remains will be destroyed in time
with the accidental torching of the Shrine.

THE ACQUISITION

Integrity is a big word in my vocabulary.
Simplicity is perhaps an even stronger word;
almost paramount. Other people disagree with me
of course. In their ontology a totality
is created at the center of which is a conceit;
one tinted more delicately than eyelashes.
These dreamers tickled savagely with the abyss
to recently procure for us at long last
yet another supremely glimmering mirage
whose message bellows out of every streetlight.
So far this vision seems confused
by the tentative and wary feelers of our lust.
New fragments are being hoisted into place.
But the apparition is indifferent.
We remain communing with ourselves and it
until the curfew's icy fragrance bleats.
Then we back off and return to the newspapers.
For now, at least, the liquefactions can relax.
Tomorrow we'll come back with laser beams.

ALMOST ANYTHING

An atmospheric abnormality
a fog-smeared greasy sky
just one bare influential cry
can activate the hockey puck of poetry

ANOTHER HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Paper on which
fine writing sits.
A thing of the past.

AT SUNDOWN

Our gazes meet and fructify
like raw eggs, broken open
just beginning to dry up. Colors
splash the moonless landscape
then leave us completely in the dark.

POSTCARD

For almost 100 years
we stood around
and watched the roof rot.

In retrospect
it seemed a decent sort of life.

**POEM IN WHICH EVERYONE WILL GET
A BIG SURPRISE**

Her
necklace
was
not
where
she had
dropped
it when
she took
it off
prior
to jumping
into bed
with the
weird stranger

now she
would have
to fire
all the help

but first
a Balkan Sobranie

Meanwhile
the man
that son-of-a-bitch
inserts the
string-of-pearls
one-by-one
into his rectum
while waiting
for his wife to wake up

THE INFRANGIBLE INFORMANT

Let us consider for half-a-minute
a car whose windshield is frozen over.
I know that I have consumed nitrous oxide
entered the vehicle in swimming trunks
then wandered aimlessly for what seems
days until just the right green light went on.
Now this...The process of waking up screaming
also sometimes occurs during our conscious hours
which makes us feel like an atheist
who is all dressed up at his own funeral
but has no place to go. That's why
we must socialize more discreetly
becoming so sensitive at last to danger signs
that we neglect to spot our own. I ramble.
But there is a moral here somewhere
one so obvious to everyone I start to cry.

FRAGMENT FROM A CRUCIAL DREAM

Death make you feel nervous?
Don't worry, we'll do fine,--
My labia are really soft balloons.

A PHILOSOPHICAL SPECIMEN

She went to work so early today.
She hopefully is driving on a real road.

GOOD OLD DOCTOR OSWALD

Once, one of my professors
was struck blind right in class.
“Oh, well, Milton went blind”
he shouted philosophically.

OVER THE OZONE

Harmonized emotions will return
Leaving distortions all alone
to wander aimlessly about
Like the young William Butler Yeats.

NOTES FROM THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

I have become the type of fraud
who only smiles silently and waves
even though we have been
neighbors now for many years.

My mother says
and I think she is right
For a public figure
you are not quite Robert Frost.

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE IT

Trim as a goose
in a gum-wrapper
still happily smiling
up at you when the
foil now crumpling
has already begun
disturbing the adventure
of Gander-Flavored-Chewables.
That's when I return
to Swan-On-The-Half-Shell.

NOT EVEN LOOKING FOR IT ANYMORE

After bearing witness an archaic town
was ripped down brick by brick
only to decline into a swamp
where frogs bellow while sheep sink
our hearts lay draped in miserable regrets.
Although it does seem sadly inappropriate
I did somehow become the one
picked out to help inform you
once more you must simply cut-and-run.
Go back across the bloody desert
keeping both eyes focused rigidly
on the nearly invisible horizon where
over and beyond the falling mountains
horsemen standing at parade-rest
were just sighted by a satellite
getting inspected by their thirsty beasts.

STARTING TO RAIN

tense twigs
wish the snow
a happy voyage home

IN DROOPING VALLEY

where the toads
eat up the roads

sustained by faith
I wonder

if that is really charmed compassion
or just a speck of asphalt in your eyes.

IN THIS POEM

There is an imaginary ocean. Not a
merely magical lake: a vast exhausted ocean
which can barely even undulate
its aches and pains around much anymore.

Overhead the pockmarked corpse of the moon
is starting to shed dandruff. Almost all
these specks of manna will disintegrate
into that unsteady lawn of spindrift tears.

But, some of those flakes may crystallize
and harden into diamonds sparkling like dew.
Only by then they could be a million fathoms down
so even if you did find one you probably would drown.

A LOST OPPORTUNITY

The half-moon-in-wind
seemed to revolve
as though part of a special trance.
When inky clouds swam by
invitations of a mindless sort appeared.
I just sat there on some driftwood
too paranoid to saunter out upon the sea.

SILLY

God will take care of you
whether you believe in Him or not.

TRYING TO ESTABLISH EYE CONTACT

A livid sun descended tonight.
Sad oblong eyes, prisoners
of the mysterious chateau,
expanded inside of graphite wings
searching for a light across the bay.
Over there, an atmosphere of Augustinian
despair enveloped the besieged commune.
Driven by auxiliary batteries
one light was projected forth
like a thin stream of urine
into the sour sponge of moonless fog.
The whole campaign seemed utterly forlorn
shrouded in a set of circumstances
more severely vacant than an adolescent's prayers.

THE SITUATION AT MID-LIFE

Apprehension stands guard over our world
like the top part of an exclamation point
at the end of a contorted sentence

which can't get closer or become more distant
to or from its period and
never is allowed to touch the bride

but must look forever forward and sideways
bordered on the right by chaos
and on the left by you-know-what

HEAVEN AT LAST

For dinner
we were served champagne
in golden elevator shoes.
Then
an oscillating
Wireless
was wheeled
into the Great Hall.
This instrument
could reproduce
the dying S O S
of every ship that ever sank.
We wept
because we had been told
we were the sole survivors.

From the *Introduction* by Gus Van Sant:

The first time that I ever saw Marty he was walking in the Portland rain with the hood of his jacket pulled over his head like deep sea diver wearing a bell helmet.

Observing him from the safety of my car, which was stopped at a stop light, Marty looked as if he was seeing things that most of us would never see. And doing things that we would never do. And thinking things that I will never think. And he was saying things that we would never be able to say. He is psychically deep sea diving, and protecting himself from the elements while gathering images in his head, the hood meant to keep them inside-o-his head until he gets home and he can deal with them there in the solitude of his confines, near his printing press....

I have always known Marty as the most independent of the Portland poets, one to be respected and sometimes feared, because he is a stick of dynamite wrapped up like a firecracker, and he can go off at any moment. But the place that I like to see him go off the best is when he is sitting and reading his poetry in front of a group of his followers and fans, like me. Because it is then that Marty really shines, and the power of his work starts to come through, in a forum, with others around to behold the words coming out of his head like a message from a man reporting from another planet. You have to have Marty there, reading it for you.

As a way of saying that I do have great respect and love of Marty's work, I told him that I would write this introduction. He impresses me with all the things that he sees that I don't, and the things that he does that I will never do. I have to read them or hear them read to me to find out what they are.

Lorna Viken Books